

COMMUNITY PLANNING & INVESTMENT PROGRAM FY 2003 WINTER/SPRING ROUND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

Comprehensive Planning Grants are available for the development of comprehensive plans pursuant to the Maine Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (30-A M.S.R.A. §4301 et seq.). Grants will be awarded to eligible municipalities on a competitive basis in accordance with the scoring criteria outlined below. **Qualified communities are encouraged to apply, with the understanding that the ability to award grants is contingent on the availability of funds, which will not be known until a later date.**

We hope to have approximately \$250,000 for Comprehensive Planning Grants, Comprehensive Plan Update Grants, and Implementation Grants in this round. As the funding source for this program includes anticipated FY2004 General Fund monies, actual contract encumbrance and dispersal of some of the anticipated state funds are contingent on legislative appropriation and cannot take place prior to July 1, 2003. **Contracts for grants awarded with FY 2003 General Funds must be executed and returned to SPO by May 28, 2003.**

Individual grant awards range between \$17,300 and \$33,300 based on a formula factoring in the size of the community. (Contact your regional council to find out the grant amount for which your community is eligible.) **The application deadline for the program is April 11, 2003. Awards will be announced by April 28, 2003.**

ELIGIBILITY

Any municipality or multi-municipal partnership seeking to produce a comprehensive plan that has not previously received a Comprehensive Planning Grant is eligible to apply for funding (see list of eligible municipalities in Appendix E).

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Please submit **five (5)** full sets of your application materials (double-sided copies, stapled or clipped, not bound) to: **Division of Purchases, Burton M. Cross Building, 4th Floor, 9 State House Station, 111 Sewall Street, Augusta, ME 04333-0009 by 2:00 p.m. on April 11, 2003. Proposals that are received after the 2:00 p.m. deadline or proposals delivered anywhere other than the Division of Purchases at the address above, cannot be considered.** Please allow adequate time for delivery. The submission packet must be clearly marked "Proposal for Comprehensive Planning Grant." No faxed or e-mailed applications will be accepted. Applications that are not complete will not be accepted.

For a grant application to be considered complete, it must include **five (5)** copies of the following:

- (1) ***Comprehensive Planning Grant Application*** signed by the municipal official(s) authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the municipality.
- (2) ***Municipal Commitment*** to provide the required local dollar match, **which must be at least 33% of the amount to be funded by the State**. Evidence must be provided that either:
 - ♦ Funds have already been committed for this purpose (attach warrant article or statement signed by an authorized municipal official - a sample warrant article and council resolution are included in Appendix C); or
 - ♦ Funds “will” be committed before June 30, 2003 (provide an explanation in the application of when this commitment will occur). Note: Any awards will be withdrawn if the local match is not forthcoming by the June 30, 2003 deadline.
- (3) ***Preliminary Assessment***, ranging from 3-8 pages in length, identifying the most important issues the comprehensive plan is to address and demonstrating the municipality’s readiness to successfully complete a comprehensive plan at this time. The preliminary assessment must address, at minimum, the following elements:
 - (a) A discussion of community issues, needs and concerns that highlights the most critical planning issues facing the community;
 - (b) A discussion of preliminary community goals and values, with a focus on articulating what the community wants to become in the future. This section should explain how the community’s goals and major planning issues relate to the ten State Goals, and, if applicable, the nine State Coastal Policies (see Appendix D);
 - (c) A discussion of the community’s readiness to conduct a comprehensive plan that describes the extent of citizen interest in, and support for, such a project and an assessment of local resources (especially human resources) that will be available to aid in the effort;
 - (d) An evaluation of any existing municipal plans or inventories that might be drawn upon to lessen the amount of work needed to prepare the plan;
 - (e) A preliminary discussion of possible growth and rural areas for the municipality; and
 - (f) Identification of any known major issues or obstacles to reaching community consensus that will require special attention if the process is to be successful (ideally with some ideas of how to address this challenge).
- (4) ***Budget and Workplan***. Whichever route you choose to take, the Budget and Workplan should indicate: (1) how the municipality intends to spend the state and local dollars and a time schedule for completing the different tasks; (2) the municipality’s approach to meeting the minimum 33% local match requirement and providing additional leveraging in the form of cash or in-kind services, if applicable; and (3) the municipality’s anticipated approach for obtaining technical assistance in order to complete the project in a timely and professional manner. All anticipated expenses must be identified, and the schedule must show how the municipality plans to have a draft comprehensive plan, including time for public hearings, ready for review by SPO within two (2) years of the grant award. *SPO encourages applicants to explore the path taken by the majority of municipalities to hire a consultant to help them through the comprehensive planning process.* Any unusual expenditures should be identified and explained. For example, if the municipality is

planning to undertake extensive mapping or special studies, some explanation is in order. Applicants may either complete the Budget and Workplan table provided in the application form, or attach a more detailed document that includes the basic components of this table.

- (5) ***Plan for Public Participation*** showing how the municipality intends to inform and involve members of the community in the process of preparing and gaining broad support for adoption of the comprehensive plan. Specifically describe (1) how you intend to share the knowledge gained from the inventory and analysis section of the plan; (2) how you intend to solicit input on the issues, goals and strategies from the different stakeholders in your community; and (3) how you plan to publicize the plan and garner support for it. In addition to conducting a community survey, publishing newsletters or holding workshops, municipalities are encouraged to consider creative and innovative approaches such as conducting a visioning session, establishing a comprehensive plan website, and involving local schools in the planning process.

Properly involving the public is crucial to demystify the process and can make the difference at the end of the planning process when the comprehensive plan is up for final adoption. An essential, in-depth discussion and array of creative approaches can be found beginning on pages 10 and 32 of the draft *A Guide to Updating Your Comprehensive Plan* accessible at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/landuse/docs/UpdateManual.pdf>. For SPO's *Community Visioning Handbook*, go to <http://www.maine.gov/spo/landuse/pubs>.

SCORING

The award of comprehensive planning grants is competitive. Completed applications will be scored and ranked according to the criteria below. Proposals that earn the highest scores will be awarded grants within available resources. **SPO reserves the right to reject any application scoring less than 70 points, any that may be incomplete, or any application due to restricted funding.**

(1) Service Center, Fast Growing Community or Slow Growing Community? — up to 20 points

These terms relate to a classification system SPO uses to better understand development patterns and objectively prioritize limited grant funding for communities that, based upon current trends, must be prepared to accommodate growth. Basically, service center communities are net importers of jobs, have the greatest concentration of retail sales and subsidized housing, and are regional providers of public services such as hospitals and courts. Fast growing and slow growing communities are determined principally by their rate of residential growth. To determine the classification of your municipality, please consult Appendix B.

The three categories are assigned fixed scores as follows:

- ◆ Service Center Communities — *20 points*
- ◆ Fast Growing Communities — *15 points*
- ◆ Slow Growing Communities — *8 points*

(2) Preliminary Assessment — up to 35 points

The degree to which the Preliminary Assessment provides a thorough and thoughtful assessment of community issues and readiness, and satisfactorily addresses items 3a) through 3f) in the *Preliminary Assessment* described above.

(3) Budget & Workplan — up to 30 points

The degree to which the budget and workplan reflect a cost-effective use of state funds, to which the required 33% local match demonstrates local financial commitment and clearly augments resources, and to which additional funds and in-kind contributions are leveraged from other sources.

(4) Plan for Public Participation — up to 15 points

The degree to which the proposed public participation plan will effectively involve and inform the public at large and the various stakeholders in the planning process. Creative proposals aimed at increasing community involvement and building support will be viewed favorably.

(5) Bonus Factor: Smart Growth Principles — up to 10 points

Additional bonus points will be awarded to proposals that include a convincing strategy for how smart growth principles (listed in *Introduction — Section A, Page 2*) will be considered in, and integrated into, the planning process. To obtain credit under this factor, the application must specifically reference each smart growth objective and explain how it will be addressed, or why it is not relevant.

Note: After grant awards are made, SPO reserves the right to conduct minor negotiations regarding the budget and workplan, and to make minor modifications in the final scope of work with the agreement of the applicant.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Municipalities should consult their regional council for help in preparing the application (see Appendix A for a list of regional council contacts). Please visit the FAQ web page that will be posted at <http://www.maine.gov/spo/landuse/docs/grantfaq.pdf> by March 14, 2003. Any necessary clarifications regarding the grant application and award process will be addressed on the FAQ web page. Due to the competitive nature of the grant program, SPO staff cannot respond to requests for assistance or advice regarding individual applications.

ELIGIBLE COSTS AND TIMING

Both the minimum required local match and the state grant must be spent on costs directly attributable to the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and ordinances consistent with the project workplan. The grants are not intended to finance the ongoing operation of planning activities. Therefore, recurring operational or maintenance costs are not eligible.

Under the Comprehensive Planning Grant Program, eligible expenses incurred prior to the grant award may be applied to the local match or may be eligible for reimbursement from the state grant, if approved in writing by SPO.

STATE BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

A final word of caution: Although this grant round factored in cuts in the agency's budget as of the end of January 2003, there is no guarantee that additional cuts will not be forthcoming. Budgetary actions of the new administration and Legislature could potentially impact funding of the grant program for this and future grant rounds. Unfortunately, such uncertainty may factor into a community's decision about whether or not to dedicate the time and effort involved in applying for these funds. It is SPO's sincere hope to offer the grant programs at the anticipated levels. We feel it is prudent to move ahead to offer grants, which provide valuable assistance to ongoing planning efforts, but feel compelled to remind communities, as they consider the time and effort involved in applying for these funds, that there is an element of risk and uncertainty that has not necessarily been a factor in previous grant rounds.